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A ROMAN LEGEND

AND

OTHER POEMS



By

James Clarence Harvey

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PH.D.

DISSERTATION

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BY

[Faint, illegible handwritten name]

A ROMAN LEGEND

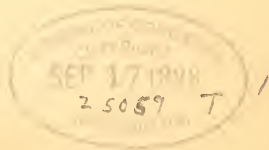
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A ROMAN LEGEND.

Hour by hour, with skillful pencil, wrought
the artist, sad and lone,
Day by day, he labored nobly, though to all the
world unknown.
He was brave, the youthful artist, but his soul
grew weak and faint,
As he strove to place before him, the fair features
of a saint.
Worn and weary, he strove vainly, for the touch
of Heavenly grace,
Till one day, a radiant sunbeam fell upon the
upturned face,
And the very air was flooded with a presence
strangely sweet,
For the soul, within the sunbeam, seemed to make
the work complete.
Swift as thought, the artist's pencil deftly touched
the features fair,
Night came down, but one bright sunbeam left its
soul imprisoned there.
And around his dingy garret, gazed the artist,
wondering,
For the work sublime illumed it, like the palace
of a king,
And within the artist nature, flamed his first fond
love divine,
Which bewildered all his senses, as with rare,
old, ruby wine ;
Yearningly, he cried ; " I love thee," to the
radiant, saintly face,
But the never-ceasing answer was a look of
Heavenly grace.

Out into the world he wandered, questioning,
 searching everywhere,
And the stars above, full often, heard his soul
 burst forth in prayer;
“God in Heaven, in mercy, hear me! Hear thy
 suppliant's pleading cry,
Lead, Oh! lead my footsteps to her; grant but
 this, or let me die.”
Friends forsook, and want pursued him, still he
 struggled on, alone,
Till, at last, outworn and trembling, reason
 tottered on its throne,
And he seemed the helpless plaything, of some
 mad, relentless fate,
Till the Sisterhood of Mercy found him lying at
 their gate ;
Made him welcome, gave him shelter and with
 ever-patient care,
Bathed his brow and brushed the tangled, matted
 tresses of his hair.
Long he lingered on the borders of the holy-land
 of death,
One fair Sister, by his bedside, counting low each
 fluttering breath.
Softly fell the evening shadows, shutting out the
 golden glow,
Of a gorgeous, lingering sunset, gilding all the
 earth below,
When, upon his pillow turning, swift came to
 him, hopes bright gleams,
For the anxious face, above him, was the loved
 one of his dreams,
But her life was one of mercy and the band,
 across her brow,
Gave the spotless testimony of a maidens', holy
 vow.
“Is this Heaven? Are you an angel?” Swift he
 questioned her, the while
She smoothed back his wavy tresses, only
 answering with a smile,

“ Tell me truly, couldst't thou love me, since thou
wouldst't not let me die?”
But she pointed to the band about her brow and
breathed a sigh.
In her hours of patient watching, she had learned
the bitter truth,
That the Sisterhood of Mercy has its anguish and
its ruth,
Never more she came, well-knowing, from
temptation she must fly,
For his eager, tender questions, in her heart had
found reply.
Every morning, he would question ; “ Will she
come to me to-day ? ”
And the tender, truthful sisters, shook their heads
and turned away,
For adown his classic features, passed the shadow
of his pain.
As he closed his eyes and murmured ; “She will
never come again,”
In his dreams, one night, he fancied, she had
bent above his bed,
And his longing arms reached upward, but the
vision sweet had fled.
Hopeless, in his great heart-hunger, through a
storm of wind and rain,
To his picture turned the artist, bowing low with
grief and pain;
Open wide, he threw the shutter of his garret
casement high,
Heeding not the vivid lightning, as it flashed
athwart the sky.
On his lowly couch reclining, soon in weariness,
he slept,
While the storm clouds o'er him thundering,
long and loud their vigils kept.
Wilder grew the night and fiercer blew the winds,
until, at last,
Like a bird of prey or demon, through the
shattered casement passed,

The old shutter, rending, tearing every
wondrous touch and trace
Of the artist's patient labor, from the radiant,
saintly face,
And the jagged bands of lightning, as they
flashed along the floor,
Lit the crushed and crumpled canvas, worthless
now, forevermore,
And the artist, slowly rising, groped his way
across the room,
Feeling, knowing he had lost her, though
enshrouded in the gloom,
Then he sought his couch and murmured; "It is
well ; God knoweth best,"
And the sunbeams of the morning found a
weary soul—at rest.

AT THE STAGE DOOR.

The curtain had fallen, the lights were dim,
The rain came down with a steady pour,
A white-haired man, with a kindly face,
Peered through the panes of the old stage door
"I'm getting too old to be drenched like that,"
He muttered and turning, met, face to face,
The woman whose genius, an hour before,
Like a mighty power, had filled the place.
"Yes, much too old," with a smile, she said,
And she laid her hand on his silver hair ;
"You shall ride with me to your home to-night,
For that is my carriage standing there."
The old door-tender stood, doffing his hat
And holding the door, but she would not stir,
Though he said it was not for the "likes of him
"To ride in a kerridge with such as her."

“Come. Put out your lights,” she said to him,
“I’ve something important I wish to say,
And I can’t stand here in the draught you know—
I can tell you much better while on the way,”
So into the carriage the old man crept,
Thanking her gratefully o’er and o’er,
Till she bade him listen while she would tell
A story, concerning that old stage door.

“It was raining in torrents, ten years ago
This very night, and a friendless child
Stood, shivering there, by that old stage door,
Dreading her walk, in a night so wild,
She was only one of the “extra” girls,
But you gave her a nickel, to take the car
And said ‘Heaven bless ye, my little one,
Ye can pay me back if ye ever star.’”

“So you cast your bread on the waters then,
And I pay you back, as my heart demands,
And we’re even now—no! not quite,” she said,
As she emptied her purse in his trembling hands :
“And if ever you’re needy and want a friend,
You know where to come, for your little mite
Put hope in my heart and made me strive
To gain the success you have seen to-night.”

Then the carriage stopped, at the old man’s door,
And the gas-light shone on him, standing there ;
And he stepped to the curb, as she rolled away,
While his thin lips murmured a fervent prayer,
He looked at the silver and bills and gold,
And he said : “She gives all this to me ?
My bread has come back, a thousand fold,
God bless her ! God bless all such as she !”

WHY ?

Why do I love thee ? Ask the flower,
That nods by the woodland stream,
Why it loves the light of the morning sun
And kisses each golden beam,
Ask of the blushing clover bloom,
In the light of the dawning day,
Why it presses the dew-drop close to its breast
And droops when it steals away.

Ask why the moonbeams kiss the sea ;
Why the lily loves the rain ;
Why the morning-glory bares its breast,
When the sunshine comes again ;
Ask why the song bird loves its mate ;
Why the daisies love the lea ;
And learn from them ; they'll tell thee true,
Why thou art dear to me.

IMPERFECTUS.

I wonder if ever a song was sung,
But the singer's heart sang sweeter !
I wonder if ever a rhyme was rung,
But the thought surpassed the meter !
I wonder if ever a sculptor wrought,
Till the cold stone echoed his ardent thought !
Or if ever a painter, with light and shade,
The dream of his inmost heart portrayed !

I wonder if ever a rose was found,
And there might not be a fairer !
Or if ever a glittering gem was ground,
And we dreamed not of a rarer !
Ah ! never on earth do we find the best,
But it waits for us, in a Land of Rest,
And a perfect thing we shall never behold,
Till we pass the portals of shining gold.

I WONDER !

I wonder if, under the grass-grown sod,
The weary, human heart finds rest!
If the soul, with its woes, when it flies to God,
Leaves all its pain, in the earth's cold breast!
Or whether we feel, as we do to-day,
That joy holds sorrow in hand, always.

I wonder if, after the kiss of death,
The love that was sweet in days of yore,
Departs with the last, faint, fleeting breath,
Or deeper grows than ever before !

I wonder if, there in the great Unknown,
Fond hearts grow weary, when left alone,

I think of the daily life I lead,
Its broken dreams and its fitful starts,
The hopeless hunger, the hearts sore need,
The joy that gladdens, the wrong that parts,
And wonder whether the coming years,
Will bring contentment, or toil and tears.

PRIORITY.

In her cozy little chamber, with her feet upon the fender,
She was reading Walter Scott, the while her husband, young
and tender,
Wore a smile upon his lips that neither tongue nor pen could render.
“Not one person out of twenty, with the first, fond lover marries,”
So she reads and o'er the sentence, for a passing moment
tarries,
While her question, with a subtle subterfuge he quickly parries.
“Was your ardent protestation unto me your first confession ?”
And ; “Was your beloved admission, your initial concession ?”
So they questioned 'till it promised to become a stormy session.
“Well ! I married my first love, providing you did ” she said
faintly,
“If you didn't—why—*I didn't,*” with a smile serene and saintly,
Thus by woman's wit the quarrel was averted very quaintly.

THE NAMELESS GUEST.

I wonder if ever the Angel of Death
Comes down from the great Unknown,
And soars away, on the wings of night,
Unburdened and alone !

I wonder if ever the angels' eyes,
Are filled with pitying tears,
As they grant to the souls, unfit for flight,
A few more weary years.

For it seems, at times, when the world is still,
And the soft, night winds are whist,
As though some spirit were hovering near,
In folds of dream-like mist.
And I feel, though mortals are nowhere near,
That I am not quite alone,
And, with dreary thoughts of dying and death,
My heart grows cold as stone.

But whether 'tis death that hovers near,
And knocks at the door of my heart,
Or whether 'tis some bright angel, come
To be of my life, a part,
I cannot tell and I long in vain,
The secret strange to know,
While the moments of mirth and grief and pain,
Move on in their ceaseless flow.

And at night when I kneel to a Higher Power
And ask his tender care,
One yearning cry, of a wayward life
Is the burthen of my prayer,
That I may bend, with willing lips,
To kiss the chastening rod,
And learn the way, through the golden gate,
To the great, white throne of God.

TWO ROSES.

Beneath thy open window, sweet,
I stood, last night, the stars, on high,
Peeped through the rift clouds, sailing by,
To light my wandering, love-led feet,
Along the path, where roses white,
Gave to the breezes of the night
A kiss of fragrance, soft and light,
With which thy sleeping smile to greet,
And as thy curtains softly swayed,
With fervent lips, sweet love, I prayed,
The warm, night wind would breathe to thee
How Heavenly dear thou art to me.

I plucked two roses, blooming there,
One, purest white, one, deepest red,
Thy love and mine, interpreted,
And flung them through the odorous air,
Naught thinking, caring naught, but this,
One bore to thee, a lover's kiss,
To tinge, perchance, a dream of bliss
And nestle in thy golden hair,
The rich, red rose, thy heart would keep,
It told of passion, strong and deep,
And well I knew thy lips would find
The kiss within, though love be blind.

And while I lingered, lovingly,
Content with thoughts that thou wert near,
E'en though thy voice I could not hear,
A sweet surprise flew forth from thee,
The pure, white rose that I had thrown,
Against my breast was gently blown,
And bore a kiss from thee, my own,
To gladden and enrapture me.
Swift lips against the petals fair,
Pressed close the kiss, imprisoned there,
And down the path, the roses white,
Heard whispered low ; " My love, Good-night."

AT SUNRISE.

Over the green grass, wet with dew,
Lightly tripping, a maiden flew,
Eyes alight with the gleam of love,
And the golden sunlight fair above.

Now she stops, and o'er the wall,
Dainty fingers and nimble feet
Cautiously climb, where wild vines crawl,
Plucking a nosegay, fresh and sweet,
"If you wouldn't be plucked from your mossy bed,
You never should be so sweet;" She said.

Over the fields, with a sturdy stride,
A yeoman stepped to the maiden's side.
And over the cheeks, that flushed so red,
With a tender smile, he bent his head.

And his arm stole gently 'round her there,
While the nosegay fell to the ground unseen,
And the song-birds warbled a sprightlier air,
For he kissed her a hundred times, I ween.
"If you'd keep your kisses, dear lips so red,
You never should be so sweet;" he said.

A CHOICE.

'Tis weak to love, if all the world
Is fickle, false and vain,
'Tis sweet to love, though all the world
Knows well that love is pain.
'Tis vain to love, if love must change,
And fill the eyes with tears,
'Tis wise to love, e'en though love range,
And rack the heart with fears.
'Tis vain, 'tis wise, 'tis weak, 'tis strong,
We know not what to do,
We only know the days are long,
When loving words are few.

To love is pain, Ah! yes, 'tis true,
And ever so 'twill be,
But not to love and not to woo,
Is greater, all agree.

So give me love, and let me find,
The sweeter, lesser woe,
Love, fillet-bound, shall lead me, blind,
Wherever he may go.

LET SILENCE FALL.

Let silence fall, across the past,
Its fitful moods of storm and rain,
Its weary hours of jealous pain,
Let never heart or speech recall.
If memory needs must break the spell,
Remember—that I loved you well,
And o'er the rest—let silence fall.

Let silence fall, between our lives,
The one, sunlit, with youthful dreams,
Flushed, with the future's hopeful gleams,
And held in proud ambition's thrall;
The other worn with anxious tears,
And tired grown, with gathering years,
Between them now—let silence fall.

And let us part, as those who love,
Are parted, by the hand of Death,
And one stands, hushed, with reverent breath,
Gazing on funeral bier and pall,
But ere we close the coffin lid,
Let bitter memories all be hid,
And o'er the grave—let silence fall.

THE RING.

A band of burnished gold,
My fingers gently hold,
And through the magic circle of its rim,
Before my dreaming eyes,
A thousand memories rise,
And fill my soul with longing, vague and dim.

I seem to see the gate,
At which I used to wait,
For her, who gave to me this token sweet,
I feel a tender thrill,
That calls to mind the hill,
Where hours, like moments, fled on pinions fleet.

The form of youthful grace,
The smiling tender face,
Is near me still, in spirit, though the years
Have slowly come and fled,
And cherished hopes lie dead
Along my way, too thickly strewn for tears.

Oh! little band of gold!
A wealth of joy untold,
Your shining circle conjures to my mind,
And will—until my breath
Shall meet the kiss of Death,
And all the pain of earth is left behind.

AN OLD SKULL,

Under a tree, in a grassy glade,
Delved I deep, with a well-worn spade,
And there, half-hid in the soil, I saw
A row of teeth and a lower jaw ;
'Twas a skull all gray and grinning.

With a bit of a glass, I scraped it clean,
'Twas the first of its kind I had ever seen,
So I fixed the jaw with a piece of twine,
Hung the skull on a climbing vine,
And said, with an accent winning :

“ I say, old skull, you’ve a happy face,
I thought that the grave was a dismal place,
I’ll wager a hat that when on earth,
You hadn’t that permanent look of mirth,
And frowned as you went about, sinning.

Confess if you’re happier now than then
And I’ll put you back in the earth again,
Refuse and your future shall surely be,
In the dusty den of an old M. D.”

The old skull kept on grinning.

A CHALLENGE.

“ Good-night,” he said, and he held her hand,
In a hesitating way,
And hoped that her eyes would understand
What his tongue refused to say.

He held her hand and he murmured low :

“ I’m sorry to go like this.
It seems so frigidly cool, you know,
This ‘ Mister ’ of ours, and ‘ Miss.’ ”

“ I thought—perchance ”—and he paused to note
If she seemed inclined to frown,
But the light in her eyes his heartstrings smote,
As she blushingly looked down.

She spoke no word, but she picked a speck,
Of dust, from his coat lapel ;
So small, such a wee, little, tiny fleck,
’Twas a wonder she saw so well ;

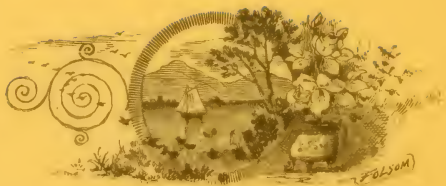
But it brought her face so very near,
In that dim, uncertain light,
That the thought, unspoken, was made quite clear,
And I know ’twas a sweet “ Good-night.”

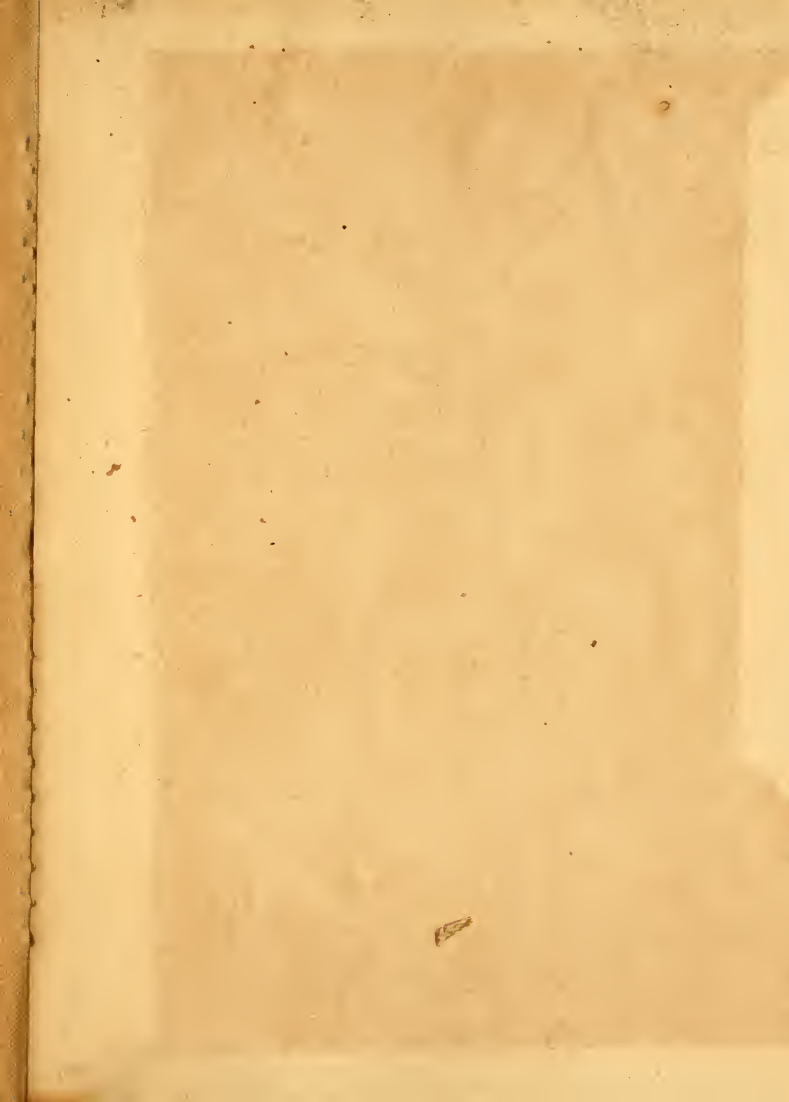
A LEGEND OF THE IVY.

In a quiet village of Germany, once dwelt a fair haired maiden,
Whose eyes were as blue as the summer sky and whose hair with
gold was laden,
Her lips were as red as a rose-bud sweet, with teeth, like pearls,
behind them ;
Her smiles were like dreams of bliss, complete, and her waving
curls enshrined them.
Fond lovers thronged to the maiden's side, but of all the youth
around her,
One only had asked her to be his bride, and a willing listener
found her ;
"Some time, we'll marry," She often said, then burst into song
or laughter,
And tripped away, while the lover's head hung low as he followed
after.
Impatient growing, at last he said ; "The spring-time birds are
mating,
Pray whisper, sweet, our day to wed, warm hearts grow cold from
waiting,"
"Not yet," She smiled, with a fond caress, but he answered ;
"Now or never!
I start for the Holy War unless, I may call thee mine forever,"
"For the Holy War ? Farewell !" she cried, with never a
thought of grieving,
His wish, so often had been denied, she could not help believing
His heart would wait, 'till her budding life had blown to its full
completeness ;
She did not know that a wedded wife, holds a spell in her
youthful sweetness,
But Alas ! for the "Yes" too long delayed, he fought and he
bravely perished.
And Alas ! for the heart of the tender maid, and the love it fondly
cherished ;
Her smile grew sad for all hope was gone ; life's sands were
swiftly fleeting,

And just at the break of a wintry dawn, her broken heart ceased
beating.
And when, on her grave, at the early spring, bright flowers her
friends were throwing,
They knelt and there, just blossoming, they saw a strange plant
growing,
Its tender fingers, at first, just seen, crept on through the grass
and clover,
'Till, at last, with a mound of perfect green, it covered the whole
grave over,
And often, the village youth would stand, by the vine clad mound,
in the gloaming,
And holding a maiden's, willing hand, would tell that the strange
plant, roaming,
Was the maiden's soul, which could not rest and with fruitless,
fond endeavor,
Went seeking the heart it loved the best, but sought in vain,
forever.







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